

PEOPLE & THINGS: By ATTICUS

THERE is nothing Trollopian about Italy's new Prime Minister, Signor Mario Scelba. It is not from a background of country-house cabals and gentlemanly debating that Signor Scelba has won the nickname of "the Italian knuckle-duster"; and his literary career has been concerned more with the editing of underground newspapers than with the elucidation of Horace.

Signor Scelba is, in fact, a twentieth-century politician. As Minister of the Interior in five post-war Italian Governments, he has shown an iron hand in an iron glove. Second to none in his hatred of dictatorship, whether from the Right or the Left. A Sicilian, he may be relied upon to act promptly in tackling the innumerable problems which face him. Supported as he is by the slenderest of Parliamentary majorities, he will need to exert himself not only against the perennial worries of strikes and unemployment, but also against charges of corruption in high places which have recently arisen from the death of an obscure but attractive carpenter's daughter.

Drastic Measures

MRS. EDWARD G. ROBINSON, M^{rs}, whose paintings are now on show at Messrs. Wildenstein's, is a person of rubicund good nature and considerable independence of spirit. There is nothing of the seclusive in her, for instance, in either her paintings of sundown at Bandera Bay, or her account of how she first reacted to this exotic subject. "Those colours!" she said to me. "When I looked out of my window and saw those colours I got under my bed with a martini and nothing would make me come out."

Whether visitors will be affected in the same way I cannot tell; but they will certainly find in Mrs. Robinson's paintings the reflection of an endearing and original nature.

A Whitman Centenary

THE United States Embassy has not waited till 1955 to celebrate the centenary of "Leaves of Grass"; already next Tuesday their Walt Whitman exhibition



Boudin's "The Harbour of Trouville."

My reference last week to the possibility of an Impressionist loan exhibition in London has prompted Mr. Robert A. Richet to remind me that THE SUNDAY TIMES was largely responsible for the presentation to the National Gallery in 1906 of its first Impressionist picture — Boudin's "The Harbour of Trouville."

Frank Rutter, who was then art critic of THE SUNDAY TIMES, persuaded the editor and pro-

prietors to open a subscription list in their columns for the purchase of a picture from the collection of Mr. Charles E. Feinberg. It was Lawrence, among those who responded; and eventually the relatively conservative proposal of a Boudin was accepted by the National Gallery, and "The Harbour of Trouville" was bought. The incident is one in which THE SUNDAY TIMES takes a particular pride.

will reveal its fascinations at No. 41 Grosvenor Square. It is drawn largely from the collection of Mr. Charles E. Feinberg. It includes letters, portraits, MSS., first editions and association copies.

A section of especial interest to English visitors is that dealing with Whitman's contacts in the British Isles. The munificence of American patronage is, of course, a twentieth-century — so much so, in fact that it is a pleasure to discover that, eighty years ago the cheque-book was in the other pocket. It was Tennyson and Ruskin, among others, who helped to keep Whitman alive at a time of grave crisis in his affairs. One of the documents on view refers, in Whitman's own words, to "that emotional,

audacious, open-hearted, friendly mouth'd, just-opportune English action which gave me life again."

Old Eatonians

WHATEVER Wellington said or will say about Waterloo, it will certainly be true of the next war that its battles will have been largely won on the playing-fields of Eaton. The War Office has had for many years a part of park of Eaton Hall, which for centuries has been the family seat of the Grosvenors and I hear that in the near future the Army will take over the whole of this peculiar pile, while the Grosvenors themselves will move to Saltram.

This development will presumably hasten the decay of those purely decorative features of Eaton

Hall which are at once the delight and the despair of the architectural scholar. Officer-cadets and their instructors can hardly be expected to share Crabbie's passion for "coats of vegetation, thinly spread, Coat upon Coat, the Living on the Dead"; and I foresee that the Victorian extravagances of Eaton Hall will shortly be curbed — if, indeed, the gigantic mansion has not already been given a military trim.

Eating Out

MONSIEUR JEAN CONIL, THE SUNDAY TIMES cooking correspondent, has just achieved a long-standing ambition. He is now running his own restaurant, the Conil Restaurant, Athenaeum Court, Piccadilly. Frankly, I saw off it the other day, it should soon prove a most sumptuous affair. A feature of the seating arrangements is that the room will be divided into screened alcoves, thus bestowing the illusion of intimacy for each separate party — an illusion rarely found in London's large restaurants.

Since he wrote his first article for THE SUNDAY TIMES in December, 1952, the name of Jean Conil has become widely known in this country. He has recently assumed the Presidency of the newly-formed Epicurean Circle, whose aim is to foster the appreciation of good food among members of the general public, and has developed into a popular broadcaster.

Modulation

THERE was general sympathy when Mr. Yehudi Menuhin when he decided, a few months ago, to forsake the aeroplane as a means of conveyance. The deaths, within a year or two, of Jacques Thibaud, Mr. André Previn, and the Claude Crüssard ensemble seemed to Mr. Menuhin, and to many of his admirers, to make nonsense of the averages.

Mr. Menuhin is about to begin a tour of India. His sister, Hephzibah, was to have been his accompanist, but she was prevented at the last moment from leaving Australia. Menuhin therefore appealed to his brother-in-law, Mr. Louis Kentner, with whom he has played at the Edinburgh Festival and in many memorable recording sessions.

"Come at once," the message began. And Mr. Kentner was dumbfounded, he tells me, to find that the next two words were: "by air."